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UNCLE SAM TO BURN UP BIG FORTUNE IN SHIPS

Washington, Aug. 4.—The greatest bonfire in the history of the Potomac river will begin to burn within a few days when a $200,000,000 war-time fleet of the shipping board comprising two hundred vessels, will be towed to Mallows Bay, three miles below Quantico, and fired.

Meanwhile the shipping board is preparing to sell two hundred other ships. The bid of Henry Ford, who offered $1,706,000 for the lot, will be taken up at once, and is expected will be accepted. The vessels which are to be burned cost a million dollars apiece to build.

They are the dilapidated remains of part of the gigantic fleet which transported man power and supplies to France during the war.

Unlike the treatment customarily accorded historic vessels these remnants are to be denied the dignity of a watery grave. They are to be cremated and their ashes blown to the four winds.

At the end of the war these ships were veritable "white elephants" on the hands of the government. Only a few could be put into peace time commission. They were sold to a salvage company for $4,000 apiece. After stripping them to the hulks, the company made an unsuccessful effort to beach and burn them.

The government has now stepped in and made arrangements for a second attempt to destroy the useless fleet.

The vessels will be destroyed in unit groups of thirty-five. An immense net will be constructed so as to safeguard against any floating debris which might escape and menace the channel.

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